**STUDENT OBJECTIVES**

Students will

* plan, write, illustrate, and publish their own children's picture books.
* analyze and evaluate a work of literature.
* participate in a review of a story written by a peer.
* use literary devices in an original work of fiction.

**Session One: Favorite Book Presentations**

1. Arrange students into groups of three members each.
2. Have group members take turns reading their favorite picture books out loud to the other two group members.
3. After reading the book, each reader should share three reasons why the book is their favorite from childhood.
4. After the reading of each book ask group members to share concrete examples of how the book was or was not effective in each of the following three areas: plot, characterization, and illustrations.
5. Encourage students to develop their own guidelines for the characteristics of effective plots, characterization, and illustrations.
6. Gather the class and review students' findings, noting the details on chart paper or the board. Save this information for later reference, as students compose their own books.

**Session Two: Book Reviews**

1. Review the guidelines that the groups compiled as they reviewed their favorite books in the previous session.
2. Pass out the [Children's Book Review Guide](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/ChildrensBookReviewGuide.pdf) and additional [books](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/RecommendedChildrensPictureBooks.pdf) for students to review.
3. Ask students to review a children's book and explore the general characteristics of children's books.
4. If possible, move students to a larger area or a location where they can read the books out loud to themselves.
5. After students have completed the review, return to the classroom and arrange the class in groups of three.
6. Have students to identify the similarities among all of the books reviewed in the group.
7. Gather the class, and have groups share their findings, comparing the results to the list from the previous session.
8. Note the details as students share to create a revised list that the class can consult while writing their own texts.

**Session Three: "I Remember" Journal Entry**

1. Explain the writing project that students will complete: composing the text and illustrations for their own children's picture books.
2. Share the [Grading Rubric](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/GradingRubric.pdf) and discuss the expectations for the activity. Answer any questions that students have.
3. Ask students to brainstorm themes that they noticed in several of the books.
4. To get students started, share one or more of the following themes and ask students to suggest how some of the books that they read fit these themes:
   * Acceptance of others
   * Concern of family dynamics
   * Physical growth (especially size)
   * Fear of the unknown
5. Once the class has compiled a list of several themes, review the list and make any additions or revisions.
6. Ask students to hypothesize why these themes resonate with young listeners, encouraging students to share any connections that they recall to the texts or to their own experiences.
7. Have students describe the memory as a journal entry. Encourage students to address all five of the senses when recounting their memory.
8. Explain that the memory does not have to be complete. If desired, encourage students to imagine or make up details that they cannot remember.
9. If additional time is needed, have students complete their journal entries for homework.

**Session Four: Brainstorming Sessions**

1. Ask volunteers to share summaries of their memories from their journals.
2. After each volunteer reads, connect the memories to the themes from the previous session.
3. Remind students of the expectations of the assignment using the [Grading Rubric](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/GradingRubric.pdf).
4. Overview the steps that students will follow: gathering details about their stories, developing plots, storyboarding, writing and illustrating, and then publishing the book.
5. Explain that during this session, students will expand on the information from their memory journal entries by brainstorming additional details.
6. Introduce one of the following options for students to use, depending upon the resources available in your classroom:
   * Have students to use the [Story Map](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/storymap/index.html) interactive to create and print out the following graphic organizers:
     + character map
     + conflict map
     + resolution map
     + setting map
   * Read through the [Tips for Writing a Children's Picture Storybook](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/Writingtips.pdf) handout and compare the observations to the books that students have read. Add or revise the guidelines as appropriate based on students' experiences with picture books. Have students complete the [Brainstorming the Conflict](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/BrainstormingConflict.pdf) chart to test out potential conflicts by identifying the complications that would or could result from attempting to solve them. Encourage students to discuss their findings with one another as they work.

**Session Five: Developing a "Plot Pitch"**

1. Allow time for volunteers to share their work from the previous session with the class. Make connections to the class list of characteristics of effective plots, characterization, and illustrations as appropriate.
2. Distribute the [Plot Pitch Template](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/PlotPitchTemplate.pdf), and have students follow the information on the sheet to develop the basic layout and details of their stories.
3. Encourage collaboration and sharing as students develop their ideas. Circulate through the room, providing support and feedback during this work time.
4. Once the basic templates are complete, have students graph their plots using the ReadWriteThink interactive [Plot Diagram](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/plot-diagram/).
5. If time allows, have students draw a sketch of their main character and the setting in which the story takes place. Encourage students to use colors in their sketches as well as labels that identify certain characteristics or details that might be revealed through the text of the story.

**Session Six: Pitching the Plot**

1. Review the activities that the class has completed so far and the expectations for the project. Answer any questions.
2. Arrange the class in pairs and have partners present their "plot pitch" to their each other.
3. Ask students to answer the questions included on the [Plot Pitch Template](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/PlotPitchTemplate.pdf) to provide written feedback to their partners.
4. If time allows, students can exchange their work with more than one partner.
5. Have students review the responses and add details or revisions to their work so far in the time remaining. Alternately, have students continue their work for homework.

**Session Seven: Storyboards**

1. Have students prepare storyboard pages by dividing several 8.5 x 11 sheets of paper into four to six boxes. Suggest folding the sheets to create the lines easily. There should be enough boxes to represent each page of the book as well as the cover.
2. Ask students to use only one side of the paper so that all thumbnails on the storyboard can be seen at once.
3. Have students to sketch the illustrations and text for each page and the cover in a pane of the storyboard. The students' goal should be to create a balance of text and illustrations that tell their story.
4. Remind students that these are rough sketches, not their final illustrations. Getting the idea across is the goal.
5. Encourage students to experiment with the location, size, and amount of text and illustrations on each page.
6. Once students have completed their storyboards, arrange the class in pairs or threes to discuss the planned layout for the books.

**Session Eight: Producing the Book**

1. Review the expectations for the assignment using the [Grading Rubric](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/GradingRubric.pdf).
2. Provide an overview of the publishing techniques that are available, using the information on the [Publishing Tips](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/PublishingTips.pdf) handout and the Websites listed in the **Resources** section.
3. Allow students to continue their work on their pages, writing and illustrating during this session.
4. Station yourself near the materials for binding the books. Provide help with the bookbinding process as students reach this stage.
5. As the books are completed, encourage students to read their stories to one another as a whole class or in small groups.
6. Allow more than one session for this final publication work if appropriate.

**EXTENSIONS**

Arrange to visit a Pre-K, Kindergarten, or 1st grade class, and have your students read their books to the students. Select the best 5 to 8 books submitted. Divide students into groups of three and assign the following tasks to be completed during the visit: reader, page-turner, and master of ceremonies. Each group can also develop short skits, costumes, or other visual props to enhance the quality of their presentations.

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS**

* Informally assess students’ participation in group and brainstorming sessions, book presentations, and journal writing.
* Use the [Grading Rubric](http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1022/GradingRubric.pdf) to evaluate students’ picture books.
* Rely on the informal feedback from younger listeners to the stories to provide additional assessment if you complete the extension.

# Plot Pitch Template

Use the template below as a guide for organizing the text of your story.

• This template is a suggestion of how the text of a 14-page children’s picture storybook could be organized. It does not include the illustrations.

• Boxes 1 and 8 are one-page spreads.

• Boxes 2 through 7 represent two-page spreads.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1  Introduce characters.  Establish the setting. | 2  Introduce the main conflict. | 3  Actions taken to deal with the conflict.  Resulting complications. | 4  Actions taken to deal with the conflict.  Resulting complications. |
| 5  Actions taken to deal with the conflict.  Resulting complications. | 6  Climax.  Presentation of the correct action for solving the conflict. | 7  Examination of the main character’s feelings. | 8  Resolution.  (“Tuck in” the main character.) |

# Plot Pitch Peer Questions

Use the following questions to help develop feedback during the plot pitch peer session activity.

1. Does the main character have one or more identifiable traits that appeal to children?

2. Is the conflict something that a child will understand?

3. Does the main character attempt at least three different actions in an endeavor to solve the conflict?

4. Is the conflict resolved through the main character’s self-reliance?

5. Overall, does the plot have “turnability” potential? Will the reader be drawn in by the plot and want to turn each page to find out what happens next?

6. Will the reader care about what happens to the main character?

7. Where are the more exciting places?

8. Where are the places that need more “zip” added to them?

# Tips for Writing a Children’s Picture Storybook

**Definition**

Children’s Picture Storybook—A work written for children that uses both text and illustrations to present a simple plot.

**Format**

Most picture books average 30 pages, consisting of 14 to 16 two-page spreads. A spread is the two pages of an open book.

**Text**

• The text of a children’s book should be organized into simple sentences and short paragraphs.

• The use of active verbs will keep the story vivid in the reader’s mind.

• Children’s book authors employ literary tools to help make the story more vivid in the reader’s mind. Rhythm, alliteration, repetition, refrains, onomatopoeia, simile, personification, rhyme, and imagery are commonly used devices.

• Consider ending each page with a question or other method that sparks the reader’s curiosity for what will happen next.

• Repeating a phrase throughout the story will help hold your reader’s attention.

• Use a question at the end of the page to help move your reader to the next page.

**Illustrations**

• Some picture books have an illustration on the front cover that presents the main conflict or point of the story.

• The illustrations are usually created after the text has been written.

• Illustrations serve as a partner to the text.

**Characterization**

• The main character should have one or two easily identifiable dominant traits.

• Present the traits of your characters through both the illustrations and text.

• Young children should be able to easily identify with the dominant traits.

• Avoid using text to present detailed descriptions of what the characters look like. Let the illustrations present the physical details of the character.

**Conflict**

• Limit your story to just one conflict that the main character must overcome.

• The main character should be able to deal with the main conflict in concrete terms.

• The main character should resolve the conflict him- or herself.

• Four of the most common types of conflict are individual vs. individual, individual vs. society, individual vs. nature, and individual vs. self.

• Some of the most common concerns of children include acceptance by others, family dynamics, physical growth (especially size and looks), and fear of the unknown (e.g., learning something new, participating in a new activity, going to a new place, getting lost).

**Plot**

• A solid, well-developed plot is essential to creating a good children’s book.

• The resolution of the conflict should teach a lesson. However, the lesson should not be told in a didactic way but instead be presented indirectly through the plot.

• Jump right into the main conflict of the story.

• Flashbacks should be used with great caution. They can confuse younger children.

# Children’s Book Review Guide

Title\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Author\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ # of pages\_\_\_

**Step One: Complete all areas of the plot chart.**

**Step Two: Respond in writing to the questions in areas A, B, and C.**

Area A: Text

1. The text of a children’s book is usually organized into simple sentences and short paragraphs. How is the text organized in the book that you have chosen to review? Explain whether this organization was sufficient for the story that this book is telling.

2. Children’s book authors often employ literary tools to help make the story more vivid in the readers’ minds. Commonly used literary tools are rhythm, alliteration, repetition, refrains, onomatopoeia, simile, personification, rhyme, and imagery. Identify three different areas in the text where a literary tool has been employed. For each example you identify, state the type of literary tool that is used and how the employment of the tool helps support the story.

3. Identify two areas in the text that use a question or other device to help move the reader to the next page.

Area B: Illustrations

1. Some picture books have an illustration on the front cover that presents the main conflict or point of the story. Identify two or more elements from the front cover of the book you are reviewing and explain how they relate to the story.

2. What is the primary medium (collage, drawings, photographs, etc.) used in the illustrations?

3. Identify the illustration that in your opinion is the most effective in developing the story as a whole. Explain how two or more elements in the illustration help support and develop the story.

4. Identify two elements that are repeated throughout a majority of the illustrations. Explain how these elements support the story.

Area C: Characterization

1. What is the easily identifiable dominant trait of the story’s main character?

2. Identify a character trait of the main character that is established through the text.

3. Identify a character trait of the main character that is established through the illustrations.

4. Identify two character traits of the main character that young children identify or sympathize with.

5. What was the main problem that the main character faces in the book? How is this problem similar to a problem that most children have faced before?

6. Sometimes a children’s book character will solve the main conflict on his or her own. How did the character in the book you selected turn to self-reliance to solve the main conflict of the story?

**Step Three: Share your responses in steps one and two with your peers. Use a graphic organizer to help you identify the common elements that appear in a majority of the works reviewed by the members in your group.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grading Rubric for the Children’s Picture Storybook 3** | | **2** | | **1** | |
| **Cover** | Title and illustration on cover clearly relate to the story and entice readers to pick up the book. | | Title and illustration clearly relate to the story. | | Title and illustration are poorly done or do not relate to the story. |
| **Text** | The font and legibility of the text do not interfere with or disrupt communication of ideas to the reader in any area of the work. | | The font and legibility of the text interfere with but do not disrupt the communication of ideas to the reader. | | The font and legibility of the text interfere with and disrupt the communication of ideas to the reader. |
| **Grammar and Spelling** | There are no grammar or spelling errors anywhere in the work. | | One or two grammar or spelling errors occur in the work. | | Three or more grammar or spelling errors occur in the work. |
| **Use of Literary Devices** | Three different literary devices are used in the work. | | Two different literary devices are used in the work. | | One or no literary devices are used in the work. |
| **Plot Development** | All five areas of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution) are present and are clearly developed. | | One of the five areas of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution) is not present and/or is not clearly developed. | | Two or more of the five areas of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution) are not present and/or are not clearly developed. |
| **The Illustrations’ Support of the Plot** | The illustrations help present the plot throughout all areas in the work. | | The illustrations help present the plot in a majority of areas throughout the work. | | The illustrations help present the plot in only a minority of areas throughout the work. |
| **Execution of Illustrations** | Illustrations are neat and visually pleasing throughout the entire work. | | Illustrations are neat and visually pleasing throughout a majority of the work. | | Illustrations need more details and attention to visual appearance. |